THE Reconstructionist

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REALITIES AND VALUES

CORRESPONDENCE

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EDITORIALS

HANUKKAH AND THE SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE

THE approach of Hanukkah in 5706 finds Jews in bitter insecurity despite the end of the World War.

Jewish communities in Europe are struggling, against a benumbing demoralization, to rebuild their shattered institutions of education, culture, social service, and religion in the midst of a suffocating anti-Semitic atmosphere and of recurrent anti-Semitic outbreaks.

In the United States we are aware both of increased activity on the part of anti-Semitic demagogues and increased anti-Jewish hoodlumism on the level of street attacks. Inter-group relationships in the American community are tense, and they may well be further aggravated as we go through the experience of management-labor troubles and other trials of reconversion.

In Eretz Yisrael the continued provocation of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement by the British Colonial Office and the new Labor goverment has finally brought forth a breach of discipline on the part of a segment of the Jewish population, which proceeded to attack British military and police posts, property, and personnel. Although the Yishuv officially and sincerely denounces wanton acts of terror, its patience has been stretched to the breaking point, and its temper is militant. Anti-Jewish riots in Arab lands, involving murder and plunder, have further embittered both the Yishuv and Jews in other countries.

In such a situation, the celebration of Hanukkah acquires added significance. For Hanukkah is the commemoration of ancient acts of heroism and national *resistance,* a resistance that was both the result and the cause of an electrifying national will to survive.

It is true that Hanukkah for many centuries was celebrated rather as a festival of religious rededication, commemorating the rededication of the Temple and the reinstitution of its rites. Pharisaic traditon, with its high moral motivation and its passion for peace, accentuated perhaps by its revulsion against the growing worldliness of the Hasmonean dynasty, repressed the natural impulse of the people to celebrate a national military victory, and emphasized instead the miracle of the cruse of oil.

We are not inclined to minimize the importance of the purely religious aspect of Hanukkah — a festival of religious rededication, a Festival of Lights and all

that the preacher may find implied in the concept of Light. But these are times for a *revaluation* of Hanukkah, to make its celebration of greater immediate service in satisfying the needs of our day. This revaluation requires only the placing of greater emphasis upon ideas that are already part of the Hanukkah story. For Hanukkah can be a symbol of *resistance,* of the reawakening of a firm national will to live. It can help raise the morale of our people by giving us a sense of support from the past in our present strivings for a better future for our people.

Let the Maccabees teach us to *resist* all down the line — to resist the illegal regulations barring Jews from entering their Homeland, to resist murderous plots and assault of anti-Semites in other countries, to resist the mischievous Jew-baiting on the American street corner. Let Hanukkah teach us that freedom must be won from the wicked, if need be even by the use of physical force.

This is not to counsel a "Jewish war." What it means is to urge that we have done with pussy-footing and with calm acceptance of the betrayal of Jews by statesmen, and of the murder of Jews by hoodlums. Only by emphasis now on resistance, implicit in Hanukkah, can we come to a time of freedom, when we can emphasize again the values — equally implicit in Hanukkah — of rededication to the ideals of religious freedom, tolerance, peace and light.

THE BACKGROUND OF BRITISH BETRAYAL

THE Jewish people has again been betrayed. This time our own government shares in the responsibility for that betrayal. To be sure, America's share is less than Great Britain's. President Truman did endeavor to secure the admission of the 100,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine, though without success. Nevertheless, he agreed to United States representation on the Commission, although its findings were prejudiced in advance by the explicit statement of the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, that a Jewish state in Palestine is precluded as a solution to the Palestine problem. President Truman thus condoned, in effect if not in intent, the British breach of faith. Great Britain is bound by treaty with the United States to make no change in the Mandate without America's consent. Nevertheless, though British policy blandly ignores the clear implications of the Mandate, our government has accepted joint responsibility with it on the Commission of Inquiry, without insisting on fidelity to the Mandate as one of the terms of reference for the Commission.

What is behind the British betrayal and our government's condoning of it? It is important that we understand the whole background of the British and American policy. When we do, we discover not only that we Jews have been betrayed, but that our betrayal is part of a trend which menaces the peace of the world.

If we consider the problem of Palestine in isolation, the present action of the British government seems almost incomprehensible. When Great Britain accepted the Mandate, that document was generally understood and interpreted by leading British statesmen as contemplating the eventual reconstruction of Palestine as a Jewish commonwealth. Such a solution of the Jewish problem was recognized as a great act of historic justice. We may rest assured, that, in accepting the responsibility of the Mandate under the League of Nations, Great Britain, however sincere in her desire to contribute to a solution of an important internation-

al problem, also felt that her own interests would be furthered by her action.

But that was in the expectation that the League of Nations would continue to function vigorously as a check on aggressive nationalism and power politics. *It is no accident that respect for the Jewish claim to Palestine was greatest when faith in international cooperation was at its height, and deteriorated as soon as the weakness of the League resulted in a resumption of the game of power politics.* The League proved impotent to halt the rise of fascism. The democratic states were reluctant to apply sanctions in order to maintain the peace and unity of the world. When isolationists became terrified and collective security had manifestly not been achieved, a policy of appeasement naturally ensued. The White Paper was obviously an appeasement of the Arabs for fear that they might go over to the Axis powers. It was of a piece with the refusal to intervene in Japan's aggression against Manchukuo, in Italy's aggression against Ethiopia, in Franco's fascist-supported aggression against Republican Spain, and with the betrayal of Czecho-Slovakia on the Sudeten issue. But now that the Axis has been defeated, why continue a policy of betrayal? How account for the fact that this policy, which was bitterly assailed by the Brtish Labor Party when it was "the opposition," is maintained by its representatives now that it is "the government." How account for America's condonation of this policy?

For an answer to these questions one must look to the general international scene. The United Nations Organization still exists only in embryo. A mass of pressing international problems are crying for a solution, and the adequate machinery for solving them on a basis of justice and international collaboration has not yet been set in motion. Empires of long standing, like those of France, Holland and Great Britain, fear the revolt of their colonies. Trade rivalries, suppressed during the war, are being revived. An armament race has been violently precipitated by our use of the atomic bomb. The big powers are carving out spheres of influence and seeking strategic advantages in disregard of the human rights of populations that lack economic and military power. Above all, we seem to be headed dangerously toward a collision between Russia on the one hand and an Anglo-American coalition on the other.

In such a situation, the Jewish appeal to the conscience and compassion of statesmen falls on deaf ears. The fulfilment of the Mandate would bring new life to hundreds of thousands of suffering, harrowed and persecuted Jews. It would help develop the latent resources of the Near-East, in the interest of all its peoples. It would reclaim vast tracts of deserts for settlement. But our statesmen do not think in these terms. Not the absolute good to humanity, but the relative good to their own national or imperial interests, is what counts with them. For them the question is not what regime in Palestine would be most beneficial to its population or to mankind in general, but what regime would insure that the oil of the Near-East be available to Great Britain and the United States rather than to Russia. The Jewish people has been sold for oil and other strategic advantages. That is the meaning of the betrayal perpetrated by the British and apparently condoned by our government.

In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that not only we have been betrayed but all mankind. The hope of humanity rests on the realization that this is one world, that international problems must be decided from the point of view of the interest of humanity as a whole, on a foun-

dation of good faith, honesty, freedom and justice. Where these considerations are subordinated to national or imperial rivalries, the ultimate result is war, and in our age of atomic energy, war may well mean the end of civilization.

Once again treatment of the Jewish people is the barometer of the world's civilization. The world today regrets that it did not heed the storm warnings when Hitler set the anti-Semites everywhere against the Jews. Today it is Great Britain that publicly flouts its obligations to the Jewish people, that denies them the right to a homeland such as every other people enjoys, that discriminates against them in the very country in which it has solemnly undertaken to facilitate the establishment of their national home. Will the world this time heed the storm warning, or will the sell-out of the Jewish people be but the prelude to a sell-out of the Indonesians, the Burmese, the people of India and Indo-China and the very Arab masses themselves? Does it, above all, portend a conflict, based on commercial and military rivalries, between the countries with a free enterprise economy and those grouped about Soviet Russia?

Under these circumstances, the Jewish people owes it not only to itself but to mankind to raise its voice in warning and protest. To acquiesce in the injustice to our people is to appease the demonic forces that menace all mankind. To insist on justice to our people is to keep faith with all who are striving for a new era of universal freedom and peace.

FOR FULL EMPLOYMENT

IF the basic freedom from want is to be achieved, the principles of the Full Employment Bill of 1945 (H. R. 2202; S. 380) will need to be adopted and realized. It is doubtful if the bill will be passed in its present form; for many people in this country are not yet ready to accept the full implications of our official democratic avowals; but agitation for passage of the bill has an important educational purpose, and in the end the bill, by one name or another, will become law and the established policy of our society.

The bill establishes a national policy for full employment without changing the free competitive character of our economy. In fact, one of the two chief objectives of the bill is "to foster free competitive enterprise and the investment of private capital." (The statement of this objective will not, of course, prevent reactionaries from labeling the measure "socialistic" or worse.) The other chief objective is to assure at all times sufficient employment opportunities for all Americans, including businessmen and farmers, who are able to work and seek work. The bill is to be in effect not only during depressions or periods of inflation, but at all times. The purpose of the bill, it is important to note, is not to give employment in periods of unemployment, but to prevent unemployment.

The federal government, under this bill, is charged with the responsibility to do everything possible to prevent a depression by stimulating expenditure and investment by businessmen, farmers, state and local governments; and only as a last resort is the federal government to be called upon to provide funds to maintain employment. Only when other measures fail is it to begin spending, and its funds are to be used to stimulate private enterprise.

The bill provides that, in his annual message, the President shall set forth a national production and employment budget, which will be an estimate of the number of people for whom job oppor-

tunities must be provided, the total national output which will be necessary to provide employment for this labor force, and the total expenditures for investment and consumption required to purchase this volume of output. If it will appear from this "budget" that a full employment volume of production is not likely, then the President shall suggest measures for achieving this goal. These measures will call for legislation for wages, banking and currency, foreign trade, social security, etc., to stimulate expeditures by private business. The measures will include direct federal expenditures only as a last resort.

The President's message will go to a Joint Congressional Committee and will then be debated in full on the floor of each House. The ultimate decision on policy will rest with Congress.

An interesting feature of the bill is the provision that the President shall establish advisory boards composed of representatives of labor, industry, agriculture, state and local governments, to advise him on methods of achieving the objectives of the bill.

The bill if enacted willl give the lie to Hayek and others who believe that democracy and national economic planning are incompatible. This bill will strengthen rather than undermine the foundations of our democratic society. There is no suggestion of a totalitarian principle in the bill. It does not guarantee specific jobs to specific workers; it does not authorize compulsory assignments of workers to jobs; it does not make the federal government the master of the economic system. The Murray-Patman Full Employment Bill is not a perfect instrument; it is note a guarantee of general prosperity; but it is a step in the right direction. Bilbo and Rankin are against it. Liberal forces should join the CIO and other labor forces to support it.

REALITIES AND VALUES

A MIRACLE DID NOT HAPPEN IN New York City. That is hardly news, but it filled considerable space in the metropolitan newspapers, because hundreds of simple-minded Christians waited with pathetic eagerness for the miracle which did not happen. It appears that a nine-year-old boy, Joseph Vitolo, who, significantly, had seen *The Song of Bernadette* in the movies, had beheld an apparition of the Virgin Mary in an empty lot near his home. He claimed to have been told that, as in the movie, a spring would gush forth from the rock where he had seen her. The place soon was converted into a shrine and visited by hundreds of people. The sick and the crippled came to be healed by a touch of the boy's hand. Meanwhile the boy was so pestered by those seeking to avail themselves of his supernatural gifts, that he is on the verge of nervous breakdown. On the night when the miracle was to occur, a thousand people gathered before the shrine on the empty lot. But nothing happened.

The moral? Religious faith heals many an ill, but when divorced from respect for reality, it can make neurotics of people. Artists like Franz Werfel who glamorize religious superstition have much to answer for.

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THE WORLD ALMANAC FOR 1946 will use the following definition of *Jews*: "Jews are a people whose religion is Judaism." The definition evidently equates Judaism with Jewish religion. This is not wholly accurate since *Judaism* is a more comprehensive term and includes also the secular aspects of Jewish civilization. The identification of Judaism with Jewish religion has, however, considerable justification in usage and arises from the perception that, in Juda-

ism, religion tends to permeate every area of Jewish life. But to say that the Jews are a people whose religion is Judaism, is like defining *Americans* by saying that they are a people whose faith is Americanism. One has to state the two propositions in the converse for them to become truly significant. Americanism is the faith of the American people; Judaism (or Jewish religion) is the faith of the Jewish people. The definition in the World Almanac has, however, this merit: it recognizes that the Jews are a people, which is more than our non-Zionist Jews are usually prepared to admit.

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BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY, Ernest Bevin, in his address to Parliament on the Palestine situation, followed the line of the American Council for Judaism in proclaiming that only the Zionists among Jews are for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. He did not say that more than 80 per cent of the Jews are Zionists. Yet a poll scientifically conducted among American Jews by the Elmo Roper Organization brought out the followig significant facts: of the 3,330 interviewed in all parts of the country and among all classes and conditions of Jews, 80.1 per cent favored a Jewish state or commonwealth in Palestine, 10.5 per cent opposed it, and 9.4 per cent were undecided. Significant is not merely the preponderance of Zionist sentiment, but the remarkably small number of undecided Jews. The issue is evidently one in which Jews are deeply interested and on which they have made up their minds. Significant also is the fact that the proportion of Zionists to non-Zionists was much greater among those Jews who attend synagogue services than among those who do not. Apparently, the American Council for Judaism notwithstanding, the more religious a Jew is, the greater the chances of his being a Zionist.

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A NEWS ITEM RECENTLY INdicated that the Catholic hierarchy of Argentina has instructed all Catholics in that country not to vote, in the forthcoming election, for any candidate who advocated the separation of church and state. From Rome comes the dispatch that Pope Pius has urged Italian Catholic teachers to press for school legislation "which respects the postulates of Christian doctrine." For the Protestants, this represents a denial of religious freedom. Certainly, if Argentina, Italy or any other country is ever to be considered democratic, it must divorce the state from any particular religious institution. A delegation of Protestants from Italy, now in the United States, has pleaded for American help in obtaining "religious freedom in Italy." Jews have every reason to sympathize with this plea. Their own freedom depends upon the separation of the state from religious institutions.

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ONE HUNDRED CIVIC ORGANizations in Chicago back the Committee on Race Relations which recently adopted a Charter of Human Relations. This Charter developed out of a study made of conditions in housing, education and employment among the various racial groups of Chicago. Among its aims are to abolish residential segregation, to initiate intercultural education in the schools, to effect the "re-education of the police," and to supervise employment agencies. The Law and Order Commission of the Committee declared that crowding and congestion, due to limiting the freedom to live any place people wish, create ghettos in America with attendant "indescribable and inevitable horrors." The recom-

(*Continued on Page* 21)

The Synagogue as a House of Worship

By ALBERT I. GORDON

A STUDY of church and synagogue attendance, published by the National Opinion Research Center (Dr. Gallup and Associates) on December 23, 1944, provides statistical evidence of the weakness of Jewish religion in America. One may infer from it not alone that Judaism is in transition, but that we Jews are in a confused and unhealthy state of mind insofar as our religious values are concerned.

Jews and Christians Compared in Respect to Attendance at Services

The Gallup Poll, universally recognized for its accuracy and scientific methodology, has tested the practices of church and synagogue attendance of the American people. The results, published at the close of last year, are sufficient to cause us Jews not a little consternation and should help to awaken even the most lethargic to a realization of the serious situation that confronts us.

To the question propounded by the Gallup Poll-takers on the frequency of attendance at religious services, 65 per cent of all persons who consider themselves Protestants answered that they attend church service at least once a month, as do 83 per cent of the Catholics. In the case of the Jews, only 18 per cent attend religious services at least once a month. Further, while 17 per cent of the Protestants go to services less than once a year or never, as compared to 8 per cent of the Catholics, 32 per cent of the Jews attend their services less than once a year or never.

Here then is the evidence that many of us have been anticipating. Our suspicions, much to our deep regret and chagrin, have been verified by the findings of the Gallup Poll.

We may, on the basis of this survey, well ask: "Why is it that 82 per cent of our Jews attend our houses of worship less than once a month? Why is that one-third of those professing to be Jews go to services less than once a year or never? Further, why is it that there is such a great variation between the attendance practices of Catholics and Protestants as compared with those of Jews?"

It is obvious that the conditions under which we Jews live, as members of a minority people among a predominantly Christian majority, do not favor quite as large an attendance at synagogue services as is characteristic of Protestants and Catholics. For the American people the Jewish Sabbath is a work day, or in some instance a half-holiday. Sunday is the Sabbath of the majority. The Christian may, on Sunday (1) go to church, (2) remain at home, (3) engage in some form of recreation, or he may combine all three choices on any given Sunday. For the Jew there is no such choice with respect to his Sabbath. The traditional Sabbath is a work-day and as such, rightly or wrongly, he feels that he may suffer economically if he does not stay on the job. Yet that argument is certainly not valid with respect to the Jew's attendance at the late Friday evening service, which is conducted by practically all synagogues and temples. His choices are in no wise different from those of the average Christian.

These statistical differences between Jew and Christian may be explained also in terms of the greater degree of authoritarianism that exists among some Chris-

tian denominations, particularly the Catholic. Jews do not measure religiosity by synagogue attendance as do Catholics by church attendance. Nor do Jews require that the rabbi serve as an intermediary between man and God. Further, we have no such institution as the Confessional and, as a consequence, the rabbi does not serve the same function as does the priest. This may, in a measure, serve to explain why attendance records of Jews cannot be compared fairly with those of Catholics. However it does not explain why, among Protestants, the monthly attendance at church services is almost four times as great as it is among Jews. There are hundreds of Protestant denominations. The sense of authority of the church and of the minister is surely not as great among Protestants as it is among Catholics. The varieties of Protestantism are indeed numerous; there are Fundamentalists and Modernists, members of a High Church as there are members of a Low Church. Every conceivable form of worship and a wide variety of theological differences are represented. Despite all of these differences, Protestants, according to this Gallup Poll, appear to have almost four times the number of regular worshipers that we Jews have.

It may be argued that by conducting synagogue services on Sunday mornings, we would soon whittle away the differences that now exist between us. Yet we must remember that, in almost all cases where synagogue or temple services were conducted on Sundays, the tendency has been to revert to the late Friday evening service. The truth is that Sunday morning services, when conducted in Jewish houses of worship have failed to draw large congregations.

Nor is the variation in attendance to be explained in terms of the quality of the preaching or the music or other factors that are mentioned from time to time. It may be said without fear of contradiction that the preaching of the average rabbi is as good as that of the average priest or minister. Moreover, the music of the synagogue is, I believe, as good as that of the church.

Reasons Given for Non-Attendance

The fact is that, all too frequently, those who are asked to explain the reason for the falling off of synagogue attendance attempt to avoid the sad and bitter truth concerning the problem by offering a variety of rationalizations, instead of facing the truth and speaking it in a forthright manner. The tendency to avoid the necessity for facing reality is intimated by the varieties of explanations and excuses that are provided by men and women when they are asked why they do not attend services more frequently.

A recent Minnesota poll, utilizing the same technique as that used by Dr. Gallup, offers a list of the excuses that are provided by Minnesotans of all faiths for failure to attend their services regularly. In the order of their frequency, they are: (1) "Too busy," (2) "Not interested," (3) "Too far to go," (4) "Can not leave the children," (5) "Churches are not taking part in social betterment programs," (6) "Churches should not take part in social betterment programs," (7) dislike of the minister in some respect. Over 50 per cent of those who replied to this poll explained their absence from church and synagogue by either "too busy" or "not interested."

What do these answers really mean? People are certainly not "too busy" to do the many other things that are available to them. They attend symphony concerts, theatres, go to parties, visit, listen to the radio, attend sports events and do a thousand and one other things at the very time that services are conducted in

our synagogues. They are never "too busy" to engage in card games or small talk or to solve international problems that, even to the most careful students of international affairs, seem most difficult of solution.

The Real Reason

The truth of the matter, it seems to me, is that people are "too busy" or "not interested" because they have found other things and other values that appear to them to have greater significance and importance. That in turn means that religion, as these people know it or understand it, is simply not a vital or important factor in their lives. We have thus far failed to make religion meaningful or relevant to most of our people. They have either so lost their faith in God, or are so completely confused about the nature of the God whom they have been called upon to worship, or find the God of their fathers so unreal that they, as a matter of sheer personal integrity, refrain from attending their houses of worship and find other avenues for their interests.

In the past the attendance of Jews at public worship equalled that of their non-Jewish neighbors. Fifty years ago, even twenty-five years ago, the problem of synagogue attendance did not appear to be of particular importance because our houses of worship were still crowded with regular worshipers. Few synagogues had "problems" about daily *minyan* or Sabbath attendance. Yet today, and this is certainly true of the Midwest, even Orthodox synagogues are faced with the necessity of using artificial means for keeping those services alive.

According to a recent report, one congregation has divided its membership alphabetically and requests attendance of all those whose last names begin with the letters 'A to G" on the first Friday evening of each month and the rest of the alphabet is to follow through the other three Friday evenings of the month. What this congregation proposes to do in the event that there are five Friday evenings in any given month remains a mystery.

None of the devices yet suggested will, I believe, tend to revive the waning interest in public worship. So long as we refuse to acknowledge the truth that men no longer worship because they no longer have the faith that characterized their elders, we shall go from bad to worse insofar as attendance is concerned. So long as we forget that faith need not be blind, that it may, indeed must, be reasonable and thereby become acceptable to our fellow-Jews, we shall continue to be witnesses to the disintegration of our synagogues as houses of worship.

The Need for an Adequate God-Idea

The first and foremost task that confronts us today then is to develop a satisfactory God-idea and to help to make man aware of God. The worship of Him must be a reasonable act. Not all men will or can accept the same approach to the God-idea. Yet, unless we help to recreate an awareness of God in the minds of our people, we can expect no great improvement in synagogue attendance. Men who are uncertain about the reality of God will not pray. Men who have no comprehension of God as a Power that makes for both personal and social salvation can find no comfort or satisfaction in attendance at a house of worship.

In a booklet published by the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods in 1928, entitled "The Voice of the Laity," opinions and attitudes of Jewish laymen with respect to all phases of synagogue life are recorded. Among the numerous statements and suggestions contained

therein is one written by an anonymous layman with special reference to the sermons that are preached by the rabbi. This man wrote: "I don't care what the serman is about, as long as it is about me. Most rabbis I know won't understand that statement." This statement is profoundly significant. It applies with equal force to every phase of the synagogue and its program, including worship.

All methods that seek to revive attendance at synagogue services but do not directly reckon with the individual and his problems are doomed to fail. All programs or campaigns that seek to win our people back to regular attendance at services without undertaking to discover the reason for the refusal of our people to attend services are valueless. The intellectual doubts concerning the God in whom they are asked to believe have not been resolved. The people's confusion has not been counteracted nor have our people been made sufficiently aware of the fact that Jews, through the ages, have had many and varied concepts of God. The God whom Maimonides worshiped was certainly far different from the God Moses knew; and Moses in turn had a far different conception of God than had the Patriarch Abraham. Why then do so many of us, by our very silence, tend to create the impression that there is no room in Judaism for varying concepts of God?

There is great need today for a reinterpretation and revitalization of the God-idea, so that it can provide the foundation on which our people can build their Jewish life.

Not only have we failed so to re-interpret the God-idea as to make God a real and vital influence in our lives, we have also failed to take into account the emotional needs of the individual, and by this neglect we have tended to keep him away from our houses of worship.

It is true of course that the synagogue has emphasized the importance of social ideals. We have spoken about justice, peace, brotherhood, and many other important goals. In most instances we have not made these ideas appear to be relevant to the life of the individual, the "me" to which the anonymous writer referred. We have tended to make religion appear to be altogether a matter that concerns "us," rather than "me." Too often the emphasis has been placed upon the group, Israel or society; too seldom do we concern ourselves with the individual, the person, the man or woman who is confronted by countless heartaches and frustrations along with his joys.

One of the great sources of strength of the synagogue of old was the fact that the individual could feel close to his God. He celebrated his moments of joy in the synagogue, even as he turned to the synagogue in his moments of despair.

How well I recall the synagogue that I attended when I was a child, with its great concern for the lives of its individual worshipers. On each "Shabbos," the congregation listened attentively to the "Mi Shebeyrachs" that were offered. Whom were they for? Why were they offered? Here was a lowly individual who asked that a prayer be offered for his sick child; there, another, who was receiving congratulations on becoming a father. On another Shabbos there was the "choson" who came to the synagogue and was called up to the Torah. He too was honored in the synagogue, and I still recall with great delight how the women in the gallery dropped raisins and other delicacies in his path. In those days, we of that congregation knew all the worshipers as individuals, as human beings.

Of course, there were many things

that were wrong with the synagogue of my childhood. Yet its strength, in certain respects, outweighed its weaknesses. The individual mattered. He acquired status when he entered the synagogue.

Despite the numerous improvements that have been made in the modern synagogue, we appear to be especially weak in this particular. The individual has all too frequently been displaced by the group. It is the mass to whom we speak. It is the congregation in the aggregate that participates in our services. The little man with his burdens, sorrows, heartaches, as well as his joys, is so engulfed by the group as a whole, that he no longer finds complete fulfillment of his religious needs in the synagogue.

Functions and duties that can be religious in nature, that can tie the individual closer to his faith and to his synagogue are all too frequently taken over by the auxiliary organizations of the congregation, such as the Men's Club, and the Women's League. Joining a congregation, which should be made the occasion for a new religious experience by the new member and his family, receives little recognition in most congregations, beyond a listing of the member's name in the congregational paper or a personal letter from the rabbi.

Shortly after the United States entered the war, our boys were called into the service of our country in large numbers. Those from my congregation, most of whom I had known since their childhood, began dropping in to see me before they left for their camps. It occurred to me that we were not utilizing this opportunity to make each of these soldiers feel that he was Isarel's representative in this conflict and that the entire congregation was interested in and concerned for him.

Accordingly a new ceremony was developed that was at once personal and beautiful. At the regular Friday evening service the writer spoke briefly to the congregation about each of the boys who was reporting for service during the coming week. Each of the boys came down the aisle of the synagogue and stood before the rabbi as prayer was offered that he might return safe and be given the courage required to fulfill his duty as an American and as a Jew. Each boy was then presented with a gift by the congregation; included with this gift was a *mezuzzah* which, the soldier was reminded, constituted not a "good-luck charm" but rather a symbol of the fact that he was a Jew and was so to conduct himself as to bring honor upon his people.

So impressive and meaningful was this brief ceremony that literally hundreds of my boys called me during the week to inform me that they were to be inducted or to leave for camp within the week, and each asked for the privilege of being included in the service on the Sabbath eve.

Of even greater significance is the fact that, with but very few exceptions, each of these boys included the rabbi and the congregation among the first to whom he wrote from camp. Thus a wonderfully healthy relationship has been established with these boys upon whom we must depend for the future growth and development of Judaism.

Nor is this an isolated experience. Because of dissatisfaction with the method (or lack of method), that had been used in welcoming new members and their families into the congregation, a ceremony was developed for the reception of new members, which was first included in one of the High Holydays services of the synagogue. Prior to this service, the new members were invited to the home of the rabbi, where an interpretation of the aims and ideals of Judaism, the place of the synagogue in Jewish life and its func-

tions were explained. Many questions were asked and the discussion proved beneficial to all concerned. We believe that the new members no longer feel themselves lost among the other members of the congregation. They know, perhaps a little better than they did before, what synagogue affiliation should mean. The importance of the individual and his family and the development of Judaism as a way of life have thus been stressed.

If we are sincerely desirous of giving to the individual a greater opportunity to express himself religiously and at the same time to feel the influence of the synagogue to a greater degree than he does at present, we must overcome the present tendency to permit the secularization of these and other important moments in the life of the individual.

There are so many occasions, aside from Bar Mitzvah and marriage, where the influence of religion can be strengthened. The birth of a child, the naming of a child, the entrance of a child into *talmud torah,* the blessing of an engaged couple in the synagogue on the Sabbath preceding their marriage, prayers for the restoration of the health of one's dear ones, prayers of thanksgiving for the dedication of a new home, or the celebration of a wedding anniversary — these are but a few of the moments in the life of an individual and his family that deserve that closer, more intimate relationship between the individual and his religion than has thus far been developed.

Nor is a simple "re-write" or translation of the "Mi Shebeyrach" or other of our traditional prayers sufficient. With the psychology of the individual in mind and an awareness of his needs and satisfactions that must be met and with the further desire to make Judaism meaningful to him, rabbinical groups and even lay groups, with the guidance of the rabbi, can, I believe, develop the needed ceremonies.

If the statement, "I want the rabbi to speak about me" has any meaning, it means surely that, while not underestimating the importance of the group and of our social ideals, we must seek to satisfy the religious needs of the individual.

Here then, are two important duties that devolve upon those who regard the present status of the synagogue as a challenge. We must, with greater honesty and courage, face the fact that near-empty synagogues mean primarily that the individual has been confounded and confused by the civilization in which we live and that, as a consequence, there is lacking a faith in God. There are many in our midst who require a new orientation to faith itself. It is to them that the reasonableness of an acceptance of the God-idea must be demonstrated.

We must also overcome the present tendency to place greater stress upon the group and society than upon the individual. For it is the average man who must find comfort and happiness in and through the synagogue and the religious philosophy which it professes to teach. Toward that end ceremonies must be created that will give to the individual a status that he all too frequently lacks in the modern synagogue.

These factors, while not all-inclusive, appear to be basic and deserve, I believe, our earnest consideration.

The Need for Democratizing Jewish Life*

Bq EUGENE KOHN

IN the preceding issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST there appeared a critique of my article, "From Theocracy to Democracy." Its author, Ruth Rackman, takes issue with my thesis that every aspect of Jewish life needs to be revised to conform to the change from a theocratic to a democratic Jewish community.

Mrs. Rackman's discussion of the relation (or non-relation) of theocracy to democracy makes a great parade of logic. Most of her propositions are stated with admirable clarity, and seem to have a great deal of truth to commend them. Her argument breaks down, however, when it is submitted to a careful analysis.

This is the line of her reasoning: Democracy is a political concept and is therefore inapplicable to Jewish life, since Jewry is not a state. Moreover, even in relation to states, democracy is a mere myth, since no state is ruled "by the consent of the governed," nor does any people explicitly delegate its authority to its government. Democracy, being exclusively a political concept, is irrelevant to such areas of Jewish life as communal organization, education, Zionism (except in Palestine), and certainly to Jewish theology. Moreover, theocracy is not in conflict with democracy, and, in any case, Jewry has not been a theocracy. Jewish law is in no need of democratization, because there is no field in which Jewish law operates except ritual and that cannot be subject to any authority, democratic or otherwise. And the upshot of her entire paper is that Judaism does not need democratization to adjust it to modern life but only scholarly reinterpretation.

Belittling the Significance of the Democratic Ideal

Mrs. Rackman quotes with approval my definition of democracy as "government by the consent of the governed" and then declares that "it is misleading to use the term in any other sense than as a political concept." Her argument assumes that only states exercise government. But such a limitation is not warranted. All forms of organized social life involve government. Every society has its constitution and by-laws and applies appropriate sanctions for their enforcement. It is not a question of whether a monarch is to be considered democratic when he "condescends to walk upon the boulevards of his capital city and caress the cheeks of commoners' children." The question is whether, for example, the action of the American Jewish Committee might be considered democratic when, after having joined the American Jewish Conference and been given opportunity to share in the determination of its policies, it not only seceded from the Conference but sought indepedently to defeat the Conference's policy with reference to a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. There may be a division of opinion as to the democracy of such a procedure, but there can be no arguing the relevance of the question whether or not the Committee's action was democratic.

So eager is Mrs. Rackman to render negligible the whole significance of the democratic ideal, that, after saying that it is applicable only to states, she goes to great pains to show that it is not even applicable to them. She denies that even

* A reply to Ruth Rackman's "From Theocracy to Democracy—a Critique."

democratic governments derive their authority explicitly from the consent of the governed. She forgets the preamble to the Constitution of the United States, which states, *"We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union, etc. . . . do establish this the Constitution of the United States of America."* Although it is true that not everybody then residing in the thirteen states had a voice in framing or even in ratifying the Constitution, the words, "We, the people . . . do establish" make it explicitly clear that the Founding Fathers deemed their authority to frame the fundamental law of the land to be derived from and delegated by "the people." It is true, as Mrs. Rackman claims, that only a minority, even in our democracies, exercise the suffrage, but that fact no more makes of the democratic ideal of government by consent a mere myth than the fact that men do not love one another proves human brotherhood to be a mere myth. It may be a myth that any government actually *is* a democracy, in the full sense of the word, but political democracy itself is not a myth but a functioning ideal. That ideal, "government of the people, for the people and by the people," remains a valid criterion of the extent to which any social organization, whether a state, a community, or what you will, is democratic.

Mrs. Rackman tries to show specifically that the democratic ideal cannot be applied to the Jewish community. She raises the question: "If Judaism is what Rabbi Kohn calls it, 'an evolving religious civilization,' and the Jewish community has the high privilege and moral obligation of preserving it, what madness would prompt one interested in the cause to abide by decisions made by those disinterested?" Her question overlooks the fact that, since nobody is compelled to belong to the Jewish community, whoever opts to do so registers by that very fac his interest in preserving the Jewish civi ization, or Judaism. He may not accep the view, which Mrs. Rackman and presumably have in common, that Jewis civilization is primarily religious, but i contributing to the welfare of the Jewis community as he sees it, he helps to de velop Jewish values and thus, willy nilly contributes to development of Jewish re ligion. For Jewish religion is not an ab stract body of doctrine, but the proces by which Jews hallow those elements o Jewish civilization that make Jewish lif worth-while. A Jew who is not inte ested in the specifically religious institu tions of Judaism (according to his un derstanding of what Jewish religion is would not participate in the governmen of those institutions. He would not, there fore, participate in any decison on ritua questions. His influence on Jewish rel gion would result entirely from the spiri ual influence of his contribution to Jew ish secular life. If he conducts himse conscientiously, that contribution may b a very important one. Religionists hav no monopoly of spiritual virtues an graces.

Democracy and Jewish Education

From the point of view that democrac is an exclusively political concept inap plicable to a voluntarist Jewish commun ity, Mrs. Rackman disposes of all th I had to say about the implications of d mocarcy for Jewish education in my orig nal article, by stating that "the Jewis community, organized as a democrac will have no more right to control relig ous education than the democratic sta has." If, by this, Mrs. Rackman mea that the Jewish community will not hav the authority to deny to any parents groups of parents the right to give their children the kind of religious ed cation that conforms to the conscience the parents, she is entirely right. But th

s not the issue. The issue is not the control over the school, but the educational objective which should determine the curricula and methods of Jewish schools. In a democracy one must sometimes tolerate the presence of authoritarian theocratic traditions even though these may be detrimental to democracy, because the alternative of suppressing them would be worse. But in Jewish schools the instruction should afford the children the kind of education that enables them to participate intelligently and responsibly in the life of the community. If that life is to be democratic, mere conformity to authoritarian precepts is not enough. The capacity to form independent ethical and theological judgments must be encouraged and developed rather than suppressed.

This cannot be achieved by the theocratic approach to education which cannot permit one to question the authenticity of any doctrine assumed by tradition to be the revealed word of God. Because of a theocratic Christian tradition, the teaching of evolution was forbidden in Tennessee public schools. It was forbidden on the ground that it denied the story of Creation as told in Genesis. How shall the Haskalah movement be taught in our Jewish schools? Must our schools suppress the knowledge of it as making for skepticism? The answer to that question will depend on whether we apporach the problem from a democratic or a theocratic view of Jewish life.

Democracy and Zionism

Mrs. Rackman admits that "insofar as it (Zionism) is a political movement, envisaging the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, it can agitate for a particular kind of state." That such a state must be democratic and not theocratic in its constitution, if Zionism is to succeed in its ultimate purpose of liberating and redeeming the Jewish people apparently does not concern her, for she completely glosses over that part of the discussion.

But it is in relation to Zionist activity in the diaspora that she gets completely off the track. "Insofar as it is a cultural movement, its own democratic structure," she writes, "will not give it any legislative powers regarding the relative superiority of one type of Jewish music over another, or the manner in which religion should be taught on Mount Scopus or Merkaz Harav." Of course not. Who ever said so? Not I in my article.

The interest of Zionism in the democratization of Jewish life in America is not related to the cultural content of Zionism, but to the functioning of Jewish communal and institutional life. Were we a religious community in the theocratic sense, as we had been until modern times, Jewish social action would be directed and controlled, or at least supervised, by the rabbinate and the lay authorities of the synagogue. That is not the situation today, nor has anybody seriously proposed a reversion to it. But what is the alternative? All that we have today is an organizational anarchy which, by default, confers tremendous prestige on the wealthy. That anarchy is aided and abetted by the Jewish escapists and assimilationists who like to soft-pedal the fact that the Jews constitute a historic entity. Zionism, on the other hand, is based on the assumption that they do. If the Jews do not, in some sense, constitute a nation or a people wherever they may be, what meaning can there be to the Zionist doctrine that Palestine is the national home of the Jewish people. But if Zionism insists that the Jews have vital interests in common beside religion, Zionists must be concerned with the creation of a Jewish communal and social structure that gives concrete reality to the peoplehood of Israel and makes possible

disciplined Jewish collaboration for common ends. It is inconceivable that such a representation of Jewish interests can be effected on other than democratic lines.

From time to time, when the lack of such a disciplined community organization affects Zionist aims regarding Palestine, Zionists raise a great outcry against undemocratic procedures, arbitrary plutocratic control, etc. They did this when the American Jewish Conference was being challenged in its Palestine policy by the American Jewish Committee. They condemn the methods of the American Council for Judaism as "undemocratic." They are now agitating against the national budgeting proposal of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds on similar grounds. But in all of these instances, their arguments are rendered less effective because, in advancing them, Zionists are special pleaders, concerned about democracy only when it affects their special interests. They would stand on a much firmer ethical ground if they acted on the assumption that the creation of a democratically functioning Jewish communal structure is a logical and necessary corollary of Jewish self-emancipation, that it is as necessary to the realization of the peoplehood of Israel as the rehabilitation of Palestine itself. They would then lend the weight of the movement's prestige to a propaganda to effect that end, either directly or through some subordinate body created for that purpose. At any rate, the problem of democracy in Jewish life is not irrelevant to Zionist ideals and aims.

Democracy and Theology

In discussing the relation of democracy to Jewish theology, Mrs. Rackman makes the same mistake as in her discussion of its relation to education. She assumes that democracy is a purely political concept and is therefore irrelevant to theology. "A political idea cannot help us in religion, when that idea itself precludes any interference whatever in matters of conscience."

But if God is understood to be the Power that makes for human self-realization, for man's fullest development of the potentialities for a happy, harmonious and creative adjustment to life, our conception of God must inevitably be influenced by our ideal of what constitutes such an orientation. Political ideals are not, therefore, irrelevant to theology. Theocracy itself is a political ideal. It implies that a people can make the most of its life collectively and individually only when it accepts the assumption that the sacred texts of its religion are a supernaturally revealed doctrine, and that the precepts they contain are divine commandments to which in every generation men owe implicit obedience.

Mrs. Rackman herself pleads unconsciously the necessity of democratizing our theology. She affirms that "theology cannot be made democratic any more than music or metaphysics. . . . God pity us if the will of the majority in music determines the type of program we shall all listen to." The implication is clear that just as music must be left to individual taste, and metaphysics to individual judgment, so religious expression must demand freedom of the individual conscience. That is good democratic doctrine. But is it good theocratic doctrine?

Remember that, for the purpose of our discussion we have defined theocracy as *"a government based on the assumption that the law by which it rules has been supernaturally revealed and is immutable, and that the persons through whom authority is exercised are entitled to unquestioned obedience so long as they exercise their authority within the limits that divine law sets for them."* From the

theocratic point of view the person who denies the divine origin of the Torah and regards some of its doctrine as no longer valid is a *kofer be-ikkar,* an apostate against the fundamental principle of Judaism, and should be excommunicated, that is boycotted and outlawed. He is an enemy of God and hence forfeits all rights under God's law, which, of course is identical with the traditional law of Israel. Only this summer, a considerable section of the American Orthodox rabbinate excommunicated Dr. Kaplan because he presumed to edit a prayer-book that voiced his own conscientious beliefs and those of his and a number of other congregations. In so doing, these Orthodox rabbis were, according to their own theology, performing the will of God; they would have been derelict in their duty, if they had acted otherwise. If Mrs. Rackman approves of freedom of conscience, she must approve of such changes in our conception of God as would encourage rather than discountenance freedom of conscience. In other words, she must approve of democratizing Jewish theology.

Mrs. Rackman tries to bolster her argument that Judaism need not depart from its theocratic character, by questioning whether the Jewish community actually was a theocracy, as I have claimed, from the fifth century until the Emancipation. "What is that?," she asks. "Was the law of the Jewish community immutable?" By putting her criticism in the form of a rhetorical question rather than a declarative statement, she obscures its irrelevance. Let us state it declaratively. The law of the Jewish community has not been immutable. Granted, but my definition of theocracy never stated that, in a theocracy, the law never actually changes. What I said, and what remains true, is that, in a theocracy, *"the assumption"* is "that the law is immutable." When the application of the law created difficulties, it was sometimes interpreted in ways contrary to its original intent, but always under the assumption that the reinterpretation really expressed the true meaning of the law. It never entered into any rabbi's mind before modern times that the original law might, even in the slightest detail, have been in error, or that any human authority might presume to alter one jot or tittle of it. The notion that men have a right knowingly and deliberately to change the law by interpretation and legal fictions is a modern rationalization and an evasion of the question, "Are the traditional codes the exact expression of the will of God for all time?"

That, as Mrs. Rackman points out, some laws outlive others even in democratic jurisprudence is irrelevant. Democracy assumes that there is no law which may not be amended when circumstances warrant. Every democratic constitution makes provision for its own amendment; no theocratic constitution does.

Does Jewish Law Need Democratization?

A peculiar technique is employed by Mrs. Rackman in her effort to minimize the need of Judaism's evolving from a theocratic to a democratic civilization. That technique should by now have become evident to the reader. Her method is to limit the meaning of the essential concepts involved until nothing is left of it. If democracy is not democracy and theocracy is not theocracy, why all this bother about substituting the one for the other? But at no point does her technique reveal itself more clearly than in her discussion of the need (or lack of need) for democratizing Jewish law. One would expect that, as a defender of tradition, she would play up the importance of

Jewish law and the danger of making any radical changes in it. Instead, she stresses its insignificance, "What is this 'Law'? Apparently it does not refer to rituals, for, even in Rabbi Kohn's sketch, 'the development of Jewish ritual would have to be left to individuals and to voluntary organization of like-minded persons.' It cannot refer to economic legislation, for Jewish law vested the *Bet Din* with complete autonomy in such matters. . . . Rabbi Kohn must, therefore, refer to some frontier of Jewish law which involves neither rituals nor commerce and industry." Of course, if Jewish law is non-existent, there can be no problem of how to democratize it.

But note that it is only from the democratic, and not at all from the theocratic viewpoint, that ritual is excluded from the realm of law. From the theocratic point of view, a Jew who deliberately violates the Sabbath is punishable by death. The fact that this penalty has, by reason of historical conditions, become inoperative does not erase it from Jewish law, it does not alter the principle that the community has a right to impose sanctions for the enforcement of ritual law. One who desecrates the Sabbath, for example, is disqualified as a witness in any *din torah*. We have already cited the instance of the *herem* pronounced against Dr. Kaplan as evidence of the insistence of defenders of the theocratic tradition on their right and duty to impose sanctions for the enforcement of ritual legislation, even for determining what prayers a Jewish congregation may or may not say.

Moreover, Mrs. Rackman completely overlooks the realm of personal status and domestic relations which is subject to Jewish law. Let us imagine a concrete situation. A man is divorced from his wife but refuses to give her a *get* which would legalize her divorce according to Jewish law. Without this, she may not remarry. But according to the law of the Torah only the man may divorce his wife; she has no authority to divorce her husband. Let us assume, for argument's sake, that the law *could* be so interpreted by a *Bet Din* as to circumvent this difficulty. That does not yet mean that it will be so interpreted by the *Bet Din*. . . . So far, no *Bet Din* has had the courage to give such an interpretation. Are we then to make the equalization of the status of the Jewish woman with that of the Jewish man dependent on the "ecclesiastical" authorities — all of whom are necessarily men—as the court of last appeal. Shall we not rather cut through the Gordian knot and say that the source of authority in Jewish law is the Jewish community and that, in that community, women, since they too are expected to conform to the law, must have a voice in determining it.

Mrs. Rackman also ignores all that I have said of the importance of developing standards of ethical practice in Jewish communal life and methods of their enforcement, which, in time, will create a new body of Jewish law that shall become Torah for future generations, when its value and importance shall have won recognition.

Can Scholarship Solve the Problem?

In view of the way in which Mrs. Rackman belittles the seriousness of the entire problem of applying democracy to Jewish communal life, it is not surprising that she is willing to leave its solution to scholarship. The only difficulty is that our scholars — and there are enough of them on the faculties of our seminaries and institutions of higher learning for purposes of consultation — apparently do not want to be bothered with the whole problem. With all their *bekiyut* (erudition) and *harifut* (acumen) they have

not modified Jewish law in the slightest degree to bring it into conformity with democratic ideals. Like Mrs. Rackman they do not recognize the reality and urgency of the problem. The law has become for them a theoretic realm in which they disport themselves; it has ceased to be an instrument for the disciplining and elevation of Jewish life.

The legal profession is, in America, the scholarly authority on matters of American law. Would Mrs. Rackman be contented with leaving the problem of democratizing American life to lawyers and judges, and be willing to forego universal suffrage, to abolish representative government, and to deny the right to amend the Constitution since its reinterpretation by the courts should suffice? Why then is she so complacent with a situation which denies to the Jewish community the right to regulate its own life?

This does not mean that scholarship is not needed, but that the function of the scholar is to teach and give expert advice, but not to make the ultimate decisions. Most modern Jews are unwilling to abdicate their responsibility for the quality of Jewish communal life and to vest it in a brain trust. Certainly they do not want to vest it in a brain trust whose only claim, even to intellectual attainment, lies in its mastery of Jewish traditional lore. The scholarship of the future must include all the sciences and all the arts, if it is to serve the total interests of Judaism as a civilization.

Perhaps, after all, the fundamental error of Mrs. Rackman is her failure to grasp the full significance of the basic principle of Reconstructionism. That principle is that Judaism is not a religious sect or denomination, the government of which can be left to learned ecclesiastical authorities familiar with its dogmas and their historic interpretation, but rather a dynamic religious civilization. As such it cannot permit its organic and development to be stunted by any authoritarian dogma, such as theocracy implies. It must be free and self-determined, in other words, democratic.

REALITIES AND VALUES

(*Continued from Page* 8)

mendations are excellent and significant. Will they be carried out? Who will take the first Negro family into his apartment house? Who the first Jewish family?

▼

EMANUEL NEUMANN, AT THE recent Zionist convention, made some penetrating remarks about the relation between Zionism and community organization—and for practically the first time, Zionist leadership as such has put a finger upon the organic character of Judaism. Mr. Neumann pointed out that the few wealthy philanthropists who control many Jewish community funds attempt to give the impression that the masses do not support Zionism. Only a democratic community, truly representative of the masses, can speak for them. "If we lend our organized support to such a democratic front, we shall break the stranglehold of our adversaries and deprive them of a control which falls into their hands so frequently by default. Give us community organization throughout the country and we shall eventually have a national representation of American Jewry whose representative character will be organic and unchallengeable." Words after our very own hearts! What Mr. Neumann says is true not only of Zionism, however, but of every positive Jewish value, like education and culture, which today is being starved of community funds, by reason of the negativism of the leaders.

Ben Zoma Says

By JEROME R. MALINO

Who is wise, pray tell, and who is strong
And who has riches and his friend's regard?
Wisdom, strength and wealth and honor are
Within the grasp of each —— Ben Zoma says.

Would you be wise? Then clear your head
Of prejudice and pretext great and small.
Go humbly to your humblest fellow man
And learn from him what he alone can teach.
You'll not be wise by cramming fact and knowledge
Into your head.
"An ass," they say, " can carry many books."
The wise learn more from fools than fools from wise;
Be wise, my son, and learn from every man!

Would you be strong? Then take your urge
To do, to be, to love, to have, to dare
And bend it to the good of all mankind.
You need not rule your fellow to be strong,
For power, might and strength need you alone.
And when your will is bent (not broken, mind you)
To the will of God, His strength will then be yours.

Would you be rich? Then know the joys that lie
Within your grasp and see no greener grass
Where others walk and live.
Be not content. Contentment sounds the knell
Of progress and the better day to come.
But as you view tomorrow, yet to be,
Thank God in prayer for having had today.

Would you know honor, and the high regard
Of men? Then simply go
Among all men and honor show to all.
For you, a man, are honored in all men;
All men in you. As you show them esteem
Esteem is yours. Nor can the meanest act
Of others rob you of that which you have given yourself.

Wisdom, strength and wealth and honor are
Within the grasp of each —— Ben Zoma says.

Correspondence

Are New Ceremonials Needed in the Home?

Sirs:

In the article "Ritual in the Jewish Home," by Rabbi Jack J. Cohen, (The Reconstructionist, Vol. IX, No. 7), the author states that there exists a definite necessity of introducing new ceremonials built around recent physical, intellectual and spiritual experiences of our people." The author further believes that Jewish tradition prohibits or discourages any creativity on the part of the individual in the field of custom and ritual.

It seems to me that his presentation of the attitude of Jewish tradition towards the introduction of new customs is quite one-sided.

On the contrary, all additions to Jewish usage and ceremonial are the direct result of the creative urge of the people. The *minhag* (usage) has never become stagnant. It has changed with changing geographic and historic conditions. Different places have adopted different customs. In fact, Jewish tradition permitted sufficient elasticity of observance to allow for the expression of individual initiative. Some *minhagim* have gone through various stages of development. The liturgic *minhag* of the Gaonic period is quite different from the liturgic rite of a present-day Jewish community. Hasidic customs have greatly varied from those of non-Hasdic congregations. This difference in *minhag* is not limited to the synagogue, but extends to all phases of ritual observance in the home.

Some individual congregations and even some families, in response to memorable events, have developed their particular customs and rituals. Jewish tradition often raised the usage of the people to the stage of law. Thus the *minhag* became a *din*. As for the author's suggestions concerning the revival of ceremonies and their adaptability to the American-Jewish scene, I must say, that I have not found one suggestion which should not have its origin and even form in our traditional usage. Floral decoration in the home will not create a specific Sabbath atmosphere. One of the most beautiful and impressive customs of the Sabbath has not even been mentioned in the author's article, namely, the blessing of the children at the Sabbath table. This traditional ceremony surely tends to strengthen family unity.

I do not see sufficient reason for including the daughter in the lighting-of-the-candles ceremony on Friday night. There is also little reason for taking away the prerogative of reciting the *Kiddush* from the *baal habayit*. And why provide the youngster with a special part in the recital of grace after meals if he is, anyway, required to recite it? Also, why go to the trouble of composing a special Sabbath book if the ancient custom of reading the weekly portion at the table and the singing of *zemirot* afford sufficient opportunity for creating a proper Sabbath atmosphere?

All in all, let us revive our rich traditional heritage before making changes which lack the sanctity and the experience of our historic past.

K. C. Klappholz
Rabbi, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Yiddish Literature for Refugees in German and Austrian Camps

Sirs:

While visiting camps of Jewish DPs and refugees in Germany and Austria, where more than 100,000 Jews are still being kept, who have lost their homes and families, I am insistently asked to supply books and newspapers in the Yiddish language. After having been cut off from the Jewish world for more than five years, they are in need of spiritual assistance. Our brothers and sisters take keenest interest in Jewish life and are very anxious to learn all about Jews in the other parts of the world.

I herewith ask your kind assistance in this most important matter. Most of our brothers and sisters read only Yiddish. We urgently need 10,000 books and a great number of newspapers, to keep our people informed about Jewish life all over the world.

As I am in constant touch with those camps, I am prepared to distribute anv books, etc., supplied by you and establish libraries in the camps and Jewish community centers.

Capt. Rev. J. Lifshitz, CF
2 Bn. Jewish Inf. Bde. Gp. B A O R

Charges Social Workers with Disparaging Rabbinate

Sirs:

Insofar as Mr. Gelbart pictures a deplorable situation in "The Centrality of Fund Raising," the facts are correct; but when he presumes to endorse and approve the situation, he seems to join the ranks of rabbi-baiters. When a Jewish social worker relegates the rabbinate to a position of being a power behind the throne, in other words, to that of a Jewish political boss; when he implies that ignorance of everything Jewish should be the acceptable qualification of a Jewish leader; then he is teaching pernicious doctrine. The danger to American Jewish life is that Mr. Gelbart is not an *avis rara* but rather he typifies the average Jewish professional social worker. Too many of them prate about democratic processes, but fawn upon the fellow who has made a little money, and disparage the rabbinate.

Rabbi Leon Spitz
New Haven, Conn.

On "The Role of the Religious Fellowship

Sirs:

I have just finished reading "The Role of the Religious Fellowship," by Nathan A. Barack, and I am trying to figure out just what he is driving at. The article seems to be a thinly veiled attack upon rabbis who, "because of a nationalistic, cultural or philanthropic approach to Judaism, do not consider themselves insincere for being in the rabbinate, although avowedly they are not religious individuals. Religion, however, is greater than loyalty to Jewish group values and to humanitarian pursuits."

What does the Chaplain have in mind. Does he mean by "avowedly" that, in his judgment, these rabbis are not religious individuals?

That is question number one. Question number two is this. What in the name of Judaism, past, present and future is he talking about? What is this new Fellowship which "leaders" and "laymen" of the old school will find it so difficult to achieve? "Synagogue lay leaders will resent being excluded from fellowship groups in cases where it may be necessary to exclude some of them," he writes. This is interesting, indeed. Who will organize the group and who will exclude whom . . . and why?

Read this next sentence, Mr. Editor. Read it carefully two or three or four times and then tell me if you please what it means. "The potential leader of the fellowship, admittedly lacking prophetic clarity of vision, full of personal intrepidity and unconditional love of the ideal, will be in need of his own fellowship for mutual inspiration and support, and for the elimination of insincere leaders from the religious field."

I submit that, if the writer has the foggiest notion of what he wishes to impart, he succeeds admirably in concealing it from his readers.

RABBI NORMAN M. GOLDBURG

Since it would take too long to communicate with Rabbi Barack, we shall endeavor to state what we believe he meant by those passages that Rabbi Goldburg finds confusiong.

1. In saying that certain rabbis do not "consider themselves insincere for being in the rabbinate although avowedly they are not religious individuals," Rabbi Barack called attention to the fact that many Jews who enter the rabbinate without any special interest in Jewish religion, do so because of their deep interest in other aspects of Judaism, political, social and cultural, which the rabbinate offers them an opportunity to pursue. That interest being genuine, they do not feel themselves insincere in entering the rabbinate to serve the Jewish people with such gifts as they possess, though these are not the gifts of *religious* leadership.

2. Membership in the Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship is limited to persons who subscribe to the principles of Reconstructionism and assume certain specific obligations for living a Jewish life which are defined in the application for membership. Persons who are not prepared to assume these responsibilities are thus excluded.

3. We admit that the passage referred to in Rabbi Goldburg's third question is somewhat obscure and should have been clarified in the editing. What the author meant was, judging by the context, that the rabbinic leaders of the Fellowship Chapters are in need of mutual stimulation and should be organized in a Chapter of their own, which would afford them that advantage. —EDITORS

On "The Role of the Religious Fellowship" Jewish Servicemen Resent Tactics of American Council for Judaism

Sirs:

It has recently come to our attention via THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST editorial of June 15, 1945 entitled: 'Defaming Jews to Appease Anti-Semites,' that a malicious movement of our own Jewish people is afoot seeking to undermine and slur the reputation of their brethren.

Time and again as is proven in the abovementioned editorial, it has unscrupulously tried to destroy everything dear to us—our faith and our freedom.

Adopting methods similar to those used by our recently defeated enemies, and continuing where the latter stopped; it will if not checked, swiftly and surely accomplish their devilish mission.

As American soldiers and Jews we cry out in bitter protest: Uproot this movement before it corrupts the entire world. Cut out this menace from our midst as a cancer which if not cut out ultimately destroys the body.

Is it this for which we fought? Is it this for which our comrades died? Is this the new way of life to which we return?

Let us pray not.

We submit this with the hope that others avail themselves of the knowledge that such a calamity exists in our group, while yet rotting in the camp of Buchenwald lie the bodies of our brethren never to be forgotten by civilization.

We invite opinions from other servicemen and civilians alike.

S/Sgt. H. Shulman
Pfc. J. Golner
Pfc. C. Silverman
Pfc. M. Goldberg
(Infantry)